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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000100

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BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, NCT, ROL COORDINATOR, IRMO/IPCC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [SY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: SADRISTS SEEK TO BLOCK KURDISH DESIGNS FOR KIRKUK

KIRKUK 00000100 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: JBIGUS, PRT LEADER, REO Kirkuk, DoS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Sadr group is searching for ways to impede progress on the Kurdification of Kirkuk. A Sadr representative in Kirkuk said the Sadrists, who represented about 75 percent of the Shia Arab population in Kirkuk, were at odds ideologically with the Badr Organization on Kirkuk issues. He also said the Sadrists in Kirkuk had no problems with the MNF-I; their problems were with the Kurds. The Sadr representative warned that the Sadrists would not accept Kirkuk going to the Kurds and were willing to fight against any group that tried to remove Kirkuk from Iraq. END SUMMARY.

Rejecting Article 58

¶2. (C) IPAO's on 17 April met with Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) representative Dr. Abdul Karim Khalifa al-Hassan to discuss political issues in Kirkuk. Hassan rejected Article 58, saying it contradicted "all rules on human rights." He complained that since the Iraqi Constitution draft had kept TAL Article 58, it also should have retained Article 53, which prevented Kirkuk from becoming part of Kurdistan. Hassan advocated reinstating Article 53 in the final Constitution. When asked why the Sadrists voted yes on the October 2005 Constitution referendum, he responded that although the Sadrists in the south favored the Constitution, the Sadrists in Kirkuk did not.

Da'wa/Sadrists Rival Badr/Kurds in Kirkuk

¶3. (C) Hassan said that more Sadrists and Da'wa members lived in Kirkuk than Badr affiliates. He claimed the Sadrists represented about 75 percent of the Shia Arab population in Kirkuk. Hassan said he grouped Da'wa and Sadrists together because the two groups shared the same ideology of working against Kurdish designs for Kirkuk and favoring administrative federalism in Iraq. He said the Badr Organization, in contrast, coalesced with the Kurds and, like the Kurds, advocated ethnic federalism.

Kurds, not MNF-I, are Main Nemesis

¶4. (C) Hassan pointed out that Shia Arabs in Kirkuk had not committed any terrorist attacks. He said OMS leader Muqtada al-Sadr had given clear orders not to attack MNF-I forces in Kirkuk; but instead to focus on protecting Shia Arabs from the

Kurds. Hassan proposed that if the Sadrists ever attacked MNF-I forces in Kirkuk, Iraqi authorities could imprison him.

15. (C) Hassan said the Sadrists in Kirkuk had no problems with the MNF-I; their problems were with the Kurds. Hassan argued that the Kurds would not be satisfied with Kirkuk oil fields alone, but would seek to annex other Iraqi oil territory into the KRG. Hassan complained that the Kurds since Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) had transferred approximately 250,000 of their people, many of whom were PKK members, to Kirkuk. He claimed a PKK community now resided in the northeast area of Kirkuk city.

16. (C) Hassan said Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) forces in Kirkuk were gathering more support from the south. Hassan warned that the Sadrists would not accept Kirkuk becoming part of the KRG and were willing to fight any group that supported that stance, stating, "this is our faith." He claimed JAM members from Sadr City in Baghdad were armed and willing to come to Kirkuk to block a Kurdish takeover. Hassan added that the Shia Arabs had the right to defend themselves, saying he was confident the JAM could occupy Kirkuk, as it had done in parts of southern Iraq.

Seeking External Help on Kirkuk

17. (C) Hassan said he favored allowing the international community (i.e. UN) to decide Kirkuk's fate. He insisted, however, that the large influx of Kurds that arrived in Kirkuk following OIF needed to return to the north before finalizing any decision. When asked if he would be willing to accept a UN decision that gave Kirkuk to the Kurds, Hassan said he would support that decision, as long as the international community thoroughly and thoughtfully researched it. He said non-Kurd groups in Iraq had formed a consultative committee to work to keep Kirkuk part of Iraq, but the committee members had not yet implemented any major decisions or plans.

Biographic Note

KIRKUK 00000100 002.2 OF 002

18. (C) Hassan was born in Kirkuk. His father moved to Kirkuk from Al Basrah when the British began exploring oil in Kirkuk. Hassan earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy. He is responsible for general relations in Kirkuk for the OMS.

Comment

19. (C) Hassan appears to recognize that the Kurds are well on their way to taking Kirkuk and is exploring ways to impede the process. Hassan's suggestion that a sufficient number of JAM members from the south would be willing to go to Kirkuk and be able to defeat the Kurds militarily is an overly bold statement at this point. Despite Badr assertions to the contrary, the Sadrists seem to be the dominant Shia Arab group in Kirkuk province.
BIGUS